

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE HMO IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 29, 1998

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare HMO Improvement Act of 1998.

Earlier this month, nearly 8,000 seniors in my district received perhaps the most frightening news any American can get. Their Medicare HMOs informed them that they are terminating their health insurance by the end of the year. Some of these seniors were recruited only months before through aggressive company marketing campaigns.

Insurers came to the federal government and said "We're private industry, we can run Medicare better than you can while giving more services to seniors. Give us a chance." Well, we gave them a chance and they let our seniors down. They thought they could just jump in and jump out of my district without regard to the health and well-being of the seniors that they had signed up just months ago. This is not acceptable. That is not a responsible way to do business.

The termination announcements sent shock waves through Tolland, Windham and New London counties. At a public meeting that I hosted with Senator CHRIS DODD to discuss this action, 400 seniors gathered to hear about their options for the future. The tension and desperation of my constituents was evident as they vented their frustration and anxiety. One of my constituents, whose wife had recently had a stroke, was so upset about what losing health insurance would mean to him and his wife that after asking a question he had a heart attack. That man, Frederick Kral, died on the way to the hospital.

Under the current system, Medicare HMOs can act with impunity. There is no accountability, no responsibility. Profits are all that matter. Patients and quality health care are secondary. This is just wrong.

My legislation will inject some accountability into the Medicare HMO system. It will change the contract term from one year to three years. This change is designed to discourage HMOs from making short-term promises to seniors only to terminate coverage a year later when they don't make quite as much money as they hoped. It gives the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) authority to enjoin contract terminations for up to one year if public health will be seriously threatened, insurance coverage will be compromised, or the Governor of the state affected requests that the Secretary exercise this authority.

Moreover, my legislation is designed to discourage HMOs from "cherry picking" between regions within a state by offering coverage only in those areas with the highest reimbursement rates. It accomplishes this goal by requiring the Secretary of HHS to terminate all contracts a Medicare HMO has for a metro-

politan statistical area (MSA) if that HMO terminates coverage in any portion of that MSA in that state. I selected the MSA as the geographical unit because it is already used in the law and should discourage "cherry picking" without reducing coverage on a state-wide basis. Finally, if a company terminates coverage and a beneficiary is currently undergoing treatment, this bill requires the HMO to provide 90 days of coverage to allow the patient to continue to receive such treatment. This will ensure that patients under active treatment will have a few additional months to make the transition to another doctor or health plan.

Mr. Speaker, what Medicare HMOs did in my district—and are doing in others across the country—is unreasonable and irresponsible. The Medicare HMO Improvement Act is a reasonable approach which will provide badly needed protection to older Americans.

THE DISTINGUISHED CAREER OF REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMIL- TON OF INDIANA

SPEECH OF

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 28, 1998

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride and much sadness that I join my colleagues in saying "Aloha" and paying tribute to one of our most respected Members, Congressman LEE HAMILTON. I met LEE over 30 years ago. We were both elected to Congress for the first time in the 1964 LBJ landslide election. Seventy-one Democrats were elected to the House that same year. We made history as the Class of 65. This 89th Congress passed some of the most important legislation: Medicare, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the War Against Poverty, and numerous youth programs.

When you leave, it will be just JOHN CONYERS and I to carry on the work of that famous freshman class of the 89th Congress.

It is hard to imagine a Congress without the strong, steady force of LEE HAMILTON. So many times he has been the voice of reason on the difficult and contentious issues in foreign policy. I have consistently relied on his advice and counsel on many issues, the Gulf War, Bosnia, Iran, Haiti, Russia, Kosova. His opinion and expertise is always respected even among those who did not agree with him. His knowledge about the subject matter and his thorough and conscientious review of all matters to assure the best policy for the good of the Nation are his special contribution to every debate.

Over the years LEE has dealt with numerous world situations and issues that seem so far away from his constituents back home. But no matter if he was dealing with Iran-Contra, weapons proliferation, or the Gulf War, LEE knew how to connect these events to the lives of his constituents.

Not many people think of LEE HAMILTON as a Liberal. I don't know if he would even like that label. But the LEE HAMILTON I know cared deeply about the needs of his people and he worked to make this a better world for our children. He fought to eradicate hunger and disease and worked to be sure education was always a high priority. He consistently proved to be a great supporter of programs to care for the most vulnerable.

In foreign policy as well as in domestic policy he worked diligently for a caring and compassionate outcome.

I know we will continue to see LEE leading this nation in some capacity, but LEE your daily presence here in the House will be missed. As an architect of our foreign policy your guidance for the past 30 years has produced the peace and stability which we now celebrate.

I wish you and Nancy all the best, as you enter this new phase in your life. As you spend time with your family please remember we still will need your advice and counsel. Best wishes and God speed.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 4060, ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOP- MENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 28, 1998

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4060, the Energy and Water Development Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1999. I support this bill mainly because it provides \$1,429,885 million for the Army Corps of Engineers construction programs. I am especially grateful that the conference agreement includes language proposed by the House to reimburse the non-Federal sponsor a portion of the Federal share of project costs for the White Oak Bayou, Texas project.

The Administration originally requested \$9.4 million for the continued construction of the Sims Bayou Project in Houston, Texas. The Conference Committee specifically earmarked a total amount of \$12 Million for the Sims Bayou project.

Mr. Speaker, the Sims Bayou Project is a project that stretches through my district. Over the course of recent years, the Sims Bayou has seen massive amounts of flooding. Citizens in my congressional district, have been flooded out of their homes, and their lives have been disrupted.

In 1994, 759 homes were flooded as a result of the overflow from the Sims Bayou. That is 759 families that were forced to leave their homes.

I mainly support the conference report, Mr. Speaker, because the subcommittee has earmarked in this bill \$12 million for the construction and improvement of the Sims Bayou

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

project that will soon be underway by the Army Corps of Engineers.

I would like to thank the Army Corps of Engineers for their cooperation in bringing relief to the people of the 18th Congressional District in order to avoid dangerous flooding.

I am quite certain Mr. Speaker that this project would not have been able to go forward if this additional money would not have been granted by the conference committee.

For that I have to thank Chairman MCDADE, Ranking Member FAZIO, and my friends and colleagues, CHET EDWARDS and MIKE PARKER who sit on the Appropriations Committee.

This must be done and I will work with the Army Corps of Engineers and local officials to ensure that this is done. I urge my colleagues to vote 'yes' on this conference report.

TRIBUTE TO SOUTH FLORIDA FOOD RECOVERY—19 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE NEEDY

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 29, 1998

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on October 16, 1998, South Florida Food Recovery will observe the anniversary of its 19th year of feeding the poor, needy and homeless throughout Miami-Dade County and all of South Florida. It is fitting that this is also World Food Day.

By any standard, South Florida Food Recovery is a remarkable organization. Its founder, the Honorable Jule Littman, who has served the City of North Miami Beach with distinction in many official capacities, saw a need in our community and sought to fill it. His vision, energy, organizational ability and perseverance has led to an alliance with 359 charitable agencies throughout Florida, through which South Florida Food Recovery provides supplemental meals to over 700,000 people each month—more than 4,200 tons of food this year, at no cost whatsoever to the recipients.

During the week of October 12, in cooperation with 302 schools in Dade County, South Florida Food Recovery will be collecting canned food for distribution to the needy. It will also dedicate its first new freezer truck, which was purchased with funds provided by the State of Florida and the Southland Corporation, based in Dallas, Texas.

In addition, since nutrition and health are so closely related, South Florida Food Recovery will complete the distribution of 500,000 toothbrushes, dental floss and toothpaste to elementary school students in Dade County, at no cost to students.

Mr. Speaker, all of our colleagues can benefit from the example set by South Florida Food Recovery. I join with our entire community in congratulating Jule Littman and his entire staff and volunteers for a job well done.

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE JESKO, DEP- UTY SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LAMPHERE SCHOOLS

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 29, 1998

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Mr. George Jesko, Deputy Superintendent of the Lamphere Schools after 33 years of service in several positions in the school district.

George first came to Lamphere Schools as a young Science teacher who also coached basketball, track and football. As a result of his success in coaching, he was named Coach of the Year after only two years. This was followed by the same honor six additional times.

George was not only a teacher and coach but also Athletic Director, Assistant High School Principal, Associate Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of Human Resources/Athletics.

In addition to his school positions, George has been an active leader in community organizations. He served as President of the Oakland Association of Personnel Administrators, Chairman of the Council of Chief Negotiators, and has been very involved in the American Association of Personal Administrators, Michigan Employer Labor Relations, the Metro Bureau and Michigan Negotiators Association.

The Lamphere Schools have indeed been fortunate to have had the services and talent of this outstanding and dedicated individual. I commend him for his commitment to the students in providing the best educational environment in both academics and athletics.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing George Jesko good health, success and happiness as he enters a new phase in his life.

TAXPAYER RELIEF ACT OF 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, September 26, 1998

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give my support to protecting 100 percent of the Social Security Trust Fund, and not using any of the projected surplus for tax cuts at this time. For over sixty years, Social Security has stood as one of our Nation's greatest success stories, providing all Americans with a basic level of retirement security.

Social Security is a contract between the citizens of the U.S. and their government. The people in this country are entitled to know that in retirement they will have security, live in dignity, and be provided with health care. Today, two-thirds of retirees in this nation depend upon Social Security to provide over half of their annual income. Our constituents should know that we, as the leaders of this country, are looking out for not only their future, but the future of their children. A vital requirement for protecting that future is saving Social Security first. Our constituents should be able to trust that their contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund are being used as intended.

I am opposed to cutting Social Security in order to provide tax cuts to those with higher incomes. As lawmakers, we owe it to the country to provide for the long-term fiscal health of Social Security and other federal retirement programs, and to ensure that these programs are available to future generations of Americans without increasing the payroll tax.

Some have suggested we should enact a series of major tax cuts in anticipation of the projected budget surplus. What these individuals neglect to point out is that almost all of the money to pay for their tax cuts would be drawn out of the Social Security Trust Fund and other federal trust funds—trust funds that should be preserved for their intended uses. The best tax cut we can give to the American family is a truly balanced federal budget. A balanced budget will lead to lower interest rates and strong economic growth. I am firmly committed to a balanced budget—a budget that protects Social Security for future generations.

In closing, let me say that the question of how to approach any budget surplus is one of the most important issues facing this country. I believe we should resist calls to spend the projected surplus and consider our options very carefully. Balancing the federal budget and keeping it balanced should continue to be one of this country's top priorities, and you can be assured that I remain absolutely committed to accomplishing these goals. We owe it to our constituents, our children, and ourselves to save Social Security.

TAXPAYER RELIEF ACT OF 1998

SPEECH OF

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, September 26, 1998

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 4578 (the "Protect Social Security" bill) and, by extension, its companion bill, H.R. 4579 (The Taxpayer Relief Act).

Current projections indicate there will be a substantial federal budget surplus over the next decade. According to the majority party, H.R. 4578 saves 90% of this projected surplus for Social Security, leaving the remaining 10% to finance the tax cuts in H.R. 4579—tax cuts worth \$80 billion over five years and \$177 billion over ten years. However, if one looks past the appealing rhetoric in support of H.R. 4578, it becomes evident that the bill is very irresponsible.

For example, even if the optimistic projections about the federal budget come true, the vastly greater portion—98%, to be more precise—of that surplus will be made up of the large yet temporary surplus in the Social Security Trust Fund. Indeed, if the Social Security surplus were excluded, there would be a \$137 billion deficit in the 1999–2003 budget period and only a \$31 billion surplus in the 1999–2008 budget period.

Given that the federal surplus in the 1999–2003 budget period will be entirely Social Security-based while the federal surplus in the 1999–2008 budget period will be almost entirely Social Security-based, it is evident that the 10% of the federal surplus that H.R. 4578 sets aside to finance the majority party's tax cuts represents a raid on Social Security.